

February 24, 2023

AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND
MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Governor's proposed budget for the Department of Corrections.

My name is Constanza Segovia and I live in Hartford. I'm an organizer with *Hartford Deportation Defense* and we are here to stand up in support of the health care rights of our neighbors currently in DOC custody. Our organization represents 170+ immigrant families and their neighbors in the Hartford area. We are members of the *HUSKY For Immigrants* and the *Recovery For All* coalitions.

In our work for health equity in CT and expanding access to HUSKY for folks regardless of immigration status, we have shared many stories of our members experiencing health emergencies and having tragic outcomes because of the lack of proper healthcare. I know that folks who are incarcerated or leaving incarceration also die of preventable causes because of inadequate care, and I worry that we are not prioritizing the basic human rights of ALL our neighbors in CT.

When we say healthcare is a human right, we mean that for everybody. When we say we work towards the wellbeing of our Hartford neighbors, we include the 1,294 Hartford residents who are currently incarcerated, and their families.

We need the state budget to allocate \$20 million to the DOC Healthcare line item to address systemic understaffing of inmate medical services, expand access, and improve the quality of healthcare and mental healthcare services for the incarcerated. We need more trauma-informed professionals on staff, and we need to make sure folks being discharged are getting the support they need, which also requires more staff and staff capacity.

Closure of 3 prisons this year will net \$25M a year in extra funding. We want to ask that that funding go into DOC services like educational programming and DOC Healthcare staff, as well as spending it on expansion of reentry services like hiring formerly incarcerated community health workers, and creating a DOC Healthcare oversight board.

Additionally, this human rights crisis is already costing the state of Connecticut. We have paid out millions of dollars in lawsuits related to medical negligence with the Department of Corrections. This is not only the right thing to do, but it's also fiscally responsible.

With billions of dollars available in the state's budget surplus and the rainy-day fund, it's time to invest in a fully expanded, well-coordinated healthcare safety net anchored by a robust public healthcare sector. Connecticut can be a model state in truly taking care of its people. We should – and can – restore and expand services to save lives.

Thank you.

Name
Constanza Segovia
Hartford, CT